Met Office

March 2001

The averaging period used for the following assessment was 1961-1990.

UK overview

Snow at times especially in the north and over high ground. Milder during the second week, and at the month's end. Relatively sunny and dry in the north and north-west but dull and wet in the south and south-east.

A transitional month. Kinbrace in Sutherland recorded -21.7 °C on the 3rd; Guernsey reached 17.5 °C on the 31st.

England and Wales diary of highlights

Mostly cold with some snow at times especially in the north and over high ground. Mild during the second week. Relatively sunny and dry in the north and north-west. Dull and wet in the south and south-east of England and East Anglia.

1st to 5th It was mostly dry but with generally slack winds and snow cover in many places especially in the north, some very low temperatures were recorded. Boltshope Park in Durham which had 30 cm of snow on the 1st, fell to -17.1 °C overnight the 2nd/3rd. There was some wintry showers over eastern and south-east counties of England; otherwise most places had sunny periods, prolonged in the north and north-west. Light southerly winds and sunshine on the 5th gave a mild day.

6th to 12th With complex low pressure centred to the west and north-west a wet but very mild period ensued. Bands of rain and showers (some heavy with thunder) affected a number of areas more especially in the south/south-east and East Anglia. The 6th in particular was very wet, with more heavy rain on the 11th and 12th, the south-east and East Anglia again bearing the brunt. North-western areas saw the most sun.

13th to 19th As the low pressure moved away to Scandinavia a new centre became established to the south-west, with fronts becoming slow moving over southern areas of England and Wales. It was generally dry at first except in the south and south-west where some heavy thundery rain broke out. During the 16th/17th a rain band made some progress northwards with sleet and snow on its northern flank. A low near the English Channel on the 18th brought some rain, sleet and snow to many areas before moving to the continent. A ridge of high pressure on the 19th gave a mainly sunny day. Mild in the south at first, colder later.

20th to 23rd Weather fronts made erratic progress northwards again bringing rain to many areas, preceded by sleet and snow especially over high ground and in the north. Wales had significant falls, and snowploughs were used on Exmoor where 5 to 8 cm of snow fell. It became very mild for a time in the south later.

24th to 26th Easterly winds brought mainly cold, cloudy conditions with patchy rain and drizzle to most places.

27th to 29th Rain and showers, some heavy with hail and thunder affected many southern areas as an Atlantic depression moved across the region. A funnel cloud was reported from Guildford in Surrey and Newmarket.

30th to 31st Much warmer but with patchy rain and drizzle, Guernsey reached 17.5 °C on the 31st.

Scotland diary of highlights

Cold and sunny.

The weather of March 2001 formed a marked contrast to that of recent years. Cold northerly and easterly winds prevailed, with milder Atlantic air being restricted to six days.

The first four days experienced very cold nights in a slack airstream following the snowstorms at the end of February. Clear skies, light winds and snow cover allowed temperatures to fall below -16 °C somewhere on each of the first four nights. The culmination was a value of -21.7 °C recorded at Kinbrace in Sutherland on the 3rd. This is close to the record March minimum of -22.8 °C observed at Logie Coldstone in Aberdeenshire in 1958.

From the 6th to the 11th a major depression in mid Atlantic directed a mild south-southwesterly airstream across Scotland. Periods of rain and showers were mixed with sunny spells.

This spell was brought to an abrupt end on the 12th when a secondary depression tracked north-east across northern England to bring 43 mm of precipitation to Aberdeen, much of which fell as snow. Thereafter a long period of northerly and then easterly winds followed, with plenty of sunshine and a few snow showers in the east.

After the 21st winds remained in the east, but low pressure and fronts pushing up from the south ensured that it became much cloudier in most places. There was rain at times, mostly in the east, with snow over high ground. It was not until the 31st that Atlantic air brought milder conditions.

Northern Ireland diary of highlights

This was a sunny March month.

The fourth consecutive month with above average sunshine across Northern Ireland. However, it was also quite a cold month and with a high frequency of overnight frosts. Rainfall was above normal in the south-east, but it was very dry in the far north and west, with the Londonderry area receiving only around 25 mm, or around a third of normal rainfall for the month.

1st to 5th Snowfalls early on the 1st, otherwise dry and quite sunny, but very cold with widespread severe frosts.

6th to 11th The mildest spell of the month, but also less sunny and with widespread persistent rain on the 6th and 11th.

12th to 20th Predominantly cold, dry and sunny with frequent overnight frosts.

21st to 27th Cold, cloudy with frequent spells of wet weather, especially in the south-east.

28th to 31st Becoming drier, warmer and sunny again. The 31st turned out to be the warmest day of the month overall.

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